

George Giankakos  
Teacher, Bridgeport Public Schools  
Testimony on Senate Bill 24  
February 21, 2012

Chairwoman Stillman, Chairman Fleischmann, and members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill 24, which I wholeheartedly support. My name is George Giankakos and I'm a 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade General Science Teacher in Bridgeport. Just last week we celebrated the 100<sup>th</sup> day of school – the second “100 day” I've celebrated in the district as a classroom teacher. The experiences I've had in Bridgeport define “unbelievable” – friends and family outside the field of education cannot process the tales I share: the behavior issues, the brokenness of the system, the ever-looming shadow of poverty. “You're teaching in a low-income district in Connecticut? What, they can only afford iPads for half their students?” In their minds Connecticut conjures up images of sailboats and prep schools, not students affected by the largest achievement gap in the country.

Senate Bill 24 not only tells the country that “Connecticut has a problem,” but also that “Connecticut is going to go to great lengths to address and correct this problem.” Although not perfect, this bill is **BOLD**: there needs to be a pipeline of talent bringing the best and the brightest educators before students in the classroom in order to initiate true change. The bill is **RADICAL**: teachers need to be valued and seen as an investment into the future of this country. Educators should be rewarded for excellent teaching and provided with pertinent, effective professional development opportunities to hone their craft as often as possible. Finally, the bill is **REVITALIZING**: the stagnation evident in the academic performance of Connecticut's students reflects the lack of inspiration teachers feel to advance professionally. Teachers should be evaluated properly – inspired and invigorated by the prospect of becoming master teachers, earning commensurate paychecks as a result.

There is so much hope coming our way. When I look at Lissette and Emanuel and Asiah and Ivelis and Joshua I see glimpses of the people they will one day become. Not even knowing it, those people will be molded from the decisions made by this Assembly and the current representatives of the State of Connecticut. I want to walk into school on Monday, look them in the eyes, and know that I did one of my most important jobs as a teacher – I advocated for kids. Because what this all boils down to is the kids. Not the partisanship, not the money, not the politics, not the rhetoric. Just the kids. Please pass Senate Bill 24 for the kids.